

Message Text

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63

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00

PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 OMB-01 AID-05 TRSE-00

/099 W

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R 061450Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6222

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL UUE LAGOS 9026

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGE, EAI, CASC, PINS, DM, NI, TO

SUBJECT: ALLEGED UNCLEARED OVERFLIGHT

REF: (A) LAGOS 8712 (B) STATE 194161 (C) COTONOU 1290 (NOTAL)

1. EMBOFFS CALLED AT ZAIRIAN EMBASSY AUGUST 6 SEEKING
INFORMATION ON ZAIRIAN EFFORTS (IF ANY) TO GET CESSNAS RELEASED.
NO ZAIRIANS WERE ON DUTY, HOWEVER, SO EMBOFFS PROCEEDED TO
FRENCH EMBASSY, WHERE THEY LEARNED FOLLOWING: MEA CALLED IN
ZAIRIAN AMBASSADOR SOON AFTER CESSNAS WERE IMPOUNDED AND
INQUIRED ABOUT IDENTITY AND DESTINATION OF AIRPLANES. ZAIRIAN
AMBASSADOR CABLED INQUIRY TO KINSHASA AND RECEIVED ANSWER AUGUST 4
TO EFFECT THAT CESSNA DID NOT ADVISE ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES OF FLIGHT
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PLAN IN TIME FOR AUTHORIZATION FOR OVERFLIGHT TO BE OBTAINED FROM

NIGERIANS. FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE DID NOT KNOW WHY ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT, RATHER THAN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CONTRACTOR SAXON SAFARI (REF A.) SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN GETTING CLEARANCE. SOURCE INDICATED ZAIRIAN AMBASSADOR RETURNED TO MEA AUGUST 5 TO PRESENT DEMARCHE; RESULTS AS YET UNKNOWN.

2. IMPOUNDED PLANES DEFINITELY HAVE U.S. CIVIL REGISTRATION NUMBERS N72007, N72035 AND N72038 AS REPORTED. PILOTS DEFINITELY ARE TWO ENGLISHMEN (NAMES COBB AND LAUGHTON) AND ONE FRENCHMAN (NAME GEORGES DESPRES). OFFICER FROM BRITISH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSION IBADAN WAS GIVEN CONSULAR ACCESS JULY 31, WITHIN 48 HOURS OF FIRST REQUEST. PILOTS HAVE NOT RPT NOT BEEN CHARGED WITH ANY VIOLATION OF NIGERIA LAW BUT THEY ARE STILL BEING HELD -- NOW AT BENIN CITY POLICE STATION RATHER THAN HOTEL. BRITISH CONSULAR OFFICER WILL VISIT THEM AGAIN AUGUST 9. BRITISH REPORT ELEPHANT GRASS GROWING UP AROUND IMPOUNDED PLANES.

3. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT EXPRESSION OF USG INTEREST IN THIS MATTER, BEFORE OUTCOME OF ZAIRIAN DEMARCHE IS KNOWN, RUNS RISK OF MUDDYING WATERS WHICH ARE ALREADY TURBID ENOUGH. EMBOFFS HAVE APPOINTMENT TO SEE ZAIRIAN FIRST SECRETARY AUGUST 7. CAHILL

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